



King's Research Portal

DOI:

[10.1080/0950236X.2017.1323458](https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2017.1323458)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Bond, L., de Bruyn, B., & Rapson, J. (2017). Introduction: Planetary memory in contemporary American fiction . *TEXTUAL PRACTICE*, 31(5), 853-866. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2017.1323458>

Citing this paper

Please note that where the full-text provided on King's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Lucy Bond, Ben De Bruyn and Jessica Rapson

Introduction: Planetary memory in contemporary American fiction

This special issue considers the ways in which contemporary American fiction seeks to imagine a mode of ‘planetary memory’ able to address the scalar and systemic complexities of the Anthropocene – the epoch in which the combined activity of the human species has become a geological force in its own right. As Naomi Klein has recently argued, confronting the problem of anthropogenic climate change alters *everything* we know about the world: demanding wholesale recalibration of economic and political priorities; destabilising the epistemic frameworks through which quotidian life is interpreted and enacted; and decentring the dominant cultural imaginaries that seek to give form to historical and future experience.¹

The conceptual implications of the Anthropocene extend far beyond the parameters of the physical and natural sciences. Across the humanities and social sciences, an emergent body of work has begun to address the challenge of reimagining theory from a planetary perspective. Whilst Dipesh Chakrabarty has argued that the conditions of this epoch impel a new mode of historical subjectivity, which he describes as ‘species history’,² dominant accounts of posthumanism have unsettled age-old distinctions between nature and culture, body and mind, and new materialists,³ speculative realists and object-oriented-ontologists have called for revised models of agency and accountability that extend beyond the human.⁴ Perhaps most strikingly, several scholars including Timothy Clark have recently argued that climate change alters the anthropocentric *scale* of history,⁵ calling for a planetary perspective on the global past, present, and future, and requiring new paradigms of critical enquiry able to address the lengthy prehistory of global warming, make visible the current geological impact of human activity, and imagine the various environmental futures that might constitute its afterlife.

This argument can hence be connected to the work of critics who have recently argued that climate change and its socioecological consequences have exposed the inadequacy of the ‘global’ as a frame of shared experience. If we want to rethink collective life in the early twenty-first century, the most important setting we should be examining may be ‘the only social site we have’, the planet.⁶ As Jennifer Wenzel contends, the idea of the ‘planetary’ simultaneously destabilises ‘the hegemony of the global’, and decentres its implicitly human subject, by revealing the fundamental imbrication of human and non-human lifeworlds.⁷ The rationale underscoring such adjustments is akin to Susan Friedman’s plea on behalf of ‘planetary modernisms’, a term which aims to bypass some of the limitations of ‘transnational’ and ‘global’. As Friedman argues:

Planetary ... echoes the spatial turn in cultural theory of the twenty-first century. It is cosmic and grounded at the same time, indicating a place and time that can be both expansive and local ... *Planetary* suggests the Earth as a place of matter and climate, life and the passage of time, and an array of species of which the human is only one.⁸

In calling for such an expanded perspective, the word ‘planetary’ refers to a type of question rather than a clear answer. As Jane Bennett suggests more broadly:

At the end of the twentieth century, the arena in which stuff happens ... seemed to many people to have expanded dramatically. ‘Globalization’ had occurred and the earth itself had become a space of events. The parts of this giant whole were both intimately interconnected and highly conflictual. This fact ... called for new conceptualizations of the part-whole relation. Organicist models, in which each member obediently serves the whole, were clearly out. A host of new ways to name the kind of relation obtaining

between the parts of a volatile but somehow functioning whole were offered: network, meshwork, Empire. My term of choice to describe this event-space ... is ... *assemblage*.⁹

Such ambiguities underscore the need to find new and fluid modes of thinking about planetary relations that resist the temptation to define or reify them in advance – an argument that might be seen as an environmental version of recent attempts to rethink the ‘worldly’ dimensions of literature.¹⁰ Thus, the ‘planetary’ turn should not be seen as a homogenising lens: rather than simply foregrounding the continuity of the conditions of contemporary life, or the interrelation of systems and environments, across the surface of the Earth, this perspective highlights the disjunctures and differential exposures to varying forms of socioecological risk that attend the era of anthropogenic climate change.

This rethinking of planetarity, not to mention humanity, materiality and agency, is of crucial importance today. Yet while Claire Colebrook has argued that the theorisation of the Anthropocene manifests a ‘critical climate change’ for scholars in the humanities, until recently critics have been slow to examine the extent to which this phenomenon has been paralleled by a cultural climate change in popular and literary discourses. Existing analyses have focused on the difficulty of conceptualising the Anthropocene, paying relatively marginal attention to the many textual forms that have sought to imagine the human and non-human causes, consequences, and afterlife of peak oil, resource wars, rising sea levels, population dislocation, and species extinction, among other issues. In so doing, climate change criticism threatens to elide the ways in which new and revisited imaginaries may, as Lorraine Code and Rosi Braidotti assert, provide alternative regimes of knowledge through which to address the issue of climate change and its social, environmental, political, and cultural inscriptions.¹¹ Redressing this imbalance, the articles in this special edition examine the recent emergence of a literary and cultural imaginary

of *planetary memory* in contemporary American fiction, which attempts to give form to the complex interrelations between human and non-human life worlds, between local, national, and global concerns, and, perhaps most importantly, between historical and geological pasts, presents and futures, made newly visible in contemporary attempts to narrate the scalar, systemic, and conceptual ructions of the Anthropocene.

Rethinking the planet

Forcing us to recalibrate the precise scale of critical enquiry, the theoretical and literary response to climate change has drastically modified earlier conceptions of spatio-temporal relations, and the established imaginaries that attend to them. Not long ago, the American writer and environmental activist Wendell Berry argued that ‘the adjective “planetary” describes a problem in such a way that it cannot be solved ... The problems, if we describe them accurately, are all private and small’.¹² For the last couple of decades, the scaled-down approach identified by Berry has arguably been the default mode of thinking in cultural studies and the humanities. Such attitudes have fundamentally shaped the ways in which criticism has conceptualised the theorisation of time and place more generally. Past trends in historical studies reveal a tendency to attend to local detail, particularised anecdotes and the circumscribed periods of the ‘Short Past’,¹³ rather than to formulate ambitious grand narratives involving the globe and its *longue durée*. More importantly for our purposes here, the relatively young subfields of ecocriticism and memory studies have similarly highlighted the importance of place rather than planet; almost by definition, early work in these subfields aimed to counteract a supposedly anonymous process of globalisation by salvaging the deeply felt environmental or memorial associations that had accrued to a certain *lieu de mémoire* or bioregion, construed narrowly or expansively. Although this work is undeniably valuable, it has tended to overlook processes that have become

increasingly hard to ignore, like global economic fragility, transnational migration flows and, last but certainly not least, newly unrecognisable environments that may stretch across regional, national, even continental borders. As we all know, our material world is being ever-more rapidly transformed by phenomena that include weird weather, eroding soils, disappearing species, proliferating plastic, rising and acidifying oceans and dwindling reserves of oil, water and other vital resources – and all of these transformations are the result of our joint activities as the planet's dominant species.

As intimated above, literary and cultural critics have begun to engage with this task in a number of distinct, but related, ways. In the last few years, a growing body of work has acquired visibility and coherence through the galvanising effect of the term 'Anthropocene' – an essentially ironic label for the geological period that bears the stamp of a species that cannot perceive of, or control, the long-term impacts of its actions. Although the observations of these diverse projects differ in certain respects, they also share several assumptions or at least areas of interest – revealing an emerging consensus among these nascent planetary approaches. Apart from the recurring reflection on weather and climate, scholars of the Anthropocene argue that we should pay closer attention to the problem of scale and particularly the clash between incompatible scalar perspectives, be they spatial or temporal in nature; to human energy consumption and resource use, leading some critics to delineate what they call the 'energy humanities'; to the insights of science and technology studies, which are seen to counteract unproductive disciplinary boundaries through ideas like hybrid material-discursive networks and distributed agency and causality; to the vibrancy and complexity of 'lively' matter and to the notion of the human, a category which is seen to require further scrutiny, not just because we have become a geological force, but also because our complicated ties with animals, machines and objects (whether these are described in terms of the post- or nonhuman), not to mention

other humans, appear directly relevant to reflections on climate change; and finally to the intertwined ideas of genre, medium and representation.

Much of this work attempts to expand the scales of critical enquiry in order to highlight the interrelation of apparently discrete geographical, historical, or cultural terrains. Exemplary of such projects is Wai Chee Dimock's *Through Other Continents* (2006), which opens the archives of US literature to the traces of the planet's spatial extension and temporal duration.¹⁴ In a more explicitly environmental vein, Ursula Heise's *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (2008) urges ecocritical writers and critics to replace their systematic focus on particular regions with a more expansive 'ecocosmopolitan' perspective better-suited to tackling proliferating if disquietingly invisible forms of risk that spill across national borders and establish 'planetary "imagined communities" of both human and nonhuman kinds'.¹⁵ Meanwhile, Adam Trexler's *Anthropocene Fictions* (2015) has provided a helpful overview of Anglophone novels that explicitly tackle climate change, noting that they circle around a fairly consistent set of issues including the role of science, the recalibration of place, the importance of political organisation and interconnected ecological and economic networks.¹⁶ Reformulating the scale of our critical lenses, it should come as no surprise that these critics reject a narrow attention to place, explicitly targeting Berry's rejection of the "planetary" in the case of Heise and Rob Nixon. As Nixon responds to Berry in his influential account of 'slow violence', personal agency and responsibility are indispensable, but 'shrink[ing] solutions to the level of the private and the small is evasive', seeing that 'planetary problems cannot simply be resolved by the aggregated actions of responsible individuals', 'most blatantly', he adds, 'in relation to climate change'.¹⁷

Developing a train of thought that is present but not systematically addressed in this first set of writings, a second strand of criticism explicitly zooms in (or zooms out) on the problem of anthropogenic global warming to examine the ways in which climate change poses a

fundamental challenge to received modes of knowledge and cognition. Mapping the work of environmental critics as well as literary authors, Clark's *Ecocriticism on the Edge* (2015) reflects closely on the scalar misalignments between human and planet, novel and climate, culture and nature, arguing that established forms of environmental criticism need to fundamentally rethink the parameters of their critical discourse.¹⁸ Meanwhile, Tom Cohen contends that the urgent problems of climate change impel cultural and critical practitioners to relinquish their attachment to outmoded intellectual systems of security, and seek modes of epistemological 'disoccupation' adequate to the task of confronting the derangements of the Anthropocene.¹⁹

In relation to this final claim, several commentators have pointed out that climate change and its constituent phenomena pose particular representational problems, because they are difficult to see or describe, because they are not interesting or dramatic or, more generally, because they are at odds with basic categories like emotion, narrative or even language. This has led some commentators to question the adequacy of existing approaches to the examination of literary texts, such as deconstruction, in this context.²⁰ Representational obstacles are articulated with particular fluency in Nixon's already much-cited exploration of 'slow violence', that which 'occurs gradually and out of sight', a process of 'delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space'.²¹ Special issues such as those edited Greg Garrard, Gary Handwerk, and Sabine Wilke (2014)²² and Allison Carruth and Robert P. Marzec (2014) have examined key imaginative short-comings and potential strategies by which they may be overcome.²³ And perhaps unsurprisingly, much recent work on climate change frequently explores questions of genre. Heise and Trexler, as well as Tobias Boes and Kate Marshall (2014), underscore the importance of science fiction and speculative realism;²⁴ Mark McGurl considers whether the scalar difficulties of the Anthropocene and the imaginative challenges of questions such as extinction are best expressed in popular genre fictions or what he has recently called

‘hypernovels’;²⁵ Nixon explicitly celebrates non-fiction, contrasting ‘the agile personal essay’ with ‘the ponderous, strategically impersonal epic report’,²⁶ whilst Dimock considers the afterlife of the epic as an important starting point for this analysis of Anthropocene genres.²⁷ Perhaps even more strikingly, many critics including Heise suggest that an efficient way of dealing with the scalar misalignments of the Anthropocene is the technique of the startling juxtaposition or, in other words, the modernist principle of montage. Clearly, then, analysing climate change is not just a matter of discussing particular topics (weather, energy, extinction etc) and locations (shops, roads, flood zones etc), but also and crucially of investigating certain formal and generic strategies.

Alongside this emerging body of research on planet and climate, which often focuses on writings from the 1970s onwards, another group of critics has started examining older cultural responses to unpredictable weather, unsustainable energy use, hubristic feats of human engineering and underlying ideas about the planet and the future – arguing that it is simply not true that either these issues or our responses to them are radically new. As ‘environmental reflexivity’ has a long history, we should not blindly assume ‘that the climatic question is entering our political and cultural arenas for the first time’.²⁸ Picking up on that suggestion, scholars like Tobias Menely and R. John Williams (and many others) have started to look for early indications of the predicament we have only recently begun to call the Anthropocene, highlighting anxious responses to unnatural seasons, urban smog and a disorienting sense of temporal instability in late eighteenth-century poetry, for instance, or the emergence of future prediction strategies that involve science, orientalist mysticism and the narrative strategies of ‘scenario planning’.²⁹ One of the more systematic attempts to trace the roots of this planetary mindset is Rosalind Williams’s account of Jules Verne, William Morris and Robert Louis Stevenson in *The Triumph of Human Empire* (2013); as Williams shows, in an argument that

effectively globalises Leo Marx's classic account of the 'machine in the garden', the end of the nineteenth century marks the moment when the world was finally fully mapped, leading to the victory of human empire in one sense – even at the very outskirts of the world, the wind would now part the fronds of a palm tree and reveal a 'native' human presence in a scene of apparently total isolation – and its defeat in another – as the spread of humans led to the loss and destruction of particular places, peoples and animals.³⁰ Again, then, the lesson is that 'we are not the first to live in this historical condition'.³¹ As these accounts insist, the global future, even the radically unstable future of the Anthropocene, already has an established if not fully explored cultural memory.

Planetary memory

This focus on memory develops a frame that enables us to consider the changing conditions under which cultural knowledge is archived and remembered in the present, and to think about how the traditional parameters of memory studies can be scaled up, along temporal as well as spatial axes, encouraging new alliances between scholars in postcolonial studies, memory studies, cultural theory and various modes of environmental criticism. This approach seeks to address some of the challenges that have heretofore been marginalised in the rush to 'think big' about climate change. Whilst it is clear that the discourses of literary studies need to be broadened to encompass the geological scale of the Anthropocene, for example, we contend that critical enquiry must not lose sight of the manifold layers of temporality, spatiality, and experience that link the micro and the macro. The risk of thinking big, after all, is that we lose sight of particular instances of suffering, eliding the inequitable distribution of human and environmental violence, and occluding a valuable opportunity to map the intersections of global upheaval and personal trauma. Talking about reading literature at a 'dehumanising' planetary

scale as well as a traditional anthropocentric one, Timothy Clark has astutely noted that a macroscopic perspective threatens to yield the same results over and over again; '[a]lmost any twentieth-century Western text with some focus on urban life, making the usual normative assumptions about lifestyle made possible by a fossil fuel-based infrastructure must lead to the same large-scale context', forcing us to keep alive 'questions at smaller, more "human" scales' if we want such stories to 'retain some specificity'.³² In arguing for large-scale thinking, in short, we should not lose sight of the smaller picture.

That is why we argue for the importance of *planetary memory*. By registering the literary inscription of individual and collective memories of climate change experience alongside the growing archive of vanishing landscapes and species that characterise the nonhuman universe of the Anthropocene, the notion of planetary memory enables us to join macro-, meso- and microscopic perspectives. This notion also has significant implications for the theoretical paradigms of memory studies. Whilst such discourses have conventionally exposed and interrogated the diverse forms of human suffering and loss that are generated by historical traumata, scholars of memory have yet to pay sustained attention to the complex imbrication of personal and planetary experience, or the diverse ways in which historical violence might be geologically inscribed. What is more, the media of planetary memory do not necessarily assume the familiar forms of orthodox memorial culture (memorials, archives, monuments etc). Rather, this concept requires us to consider other traces of human history, such as carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere and the chemical composition of our seas and soils. Moreover, if new scholarship should take into account such nonhuman traces of the past, it should also consider that climate change imaginaries frequently foreground the topic of future 'memories' that may postdate human existence upon this planet, warping the usual direction of memory research through this 'catachronism'.³³ As Paul Saint-Amour has recently argued in a study of total war

discourse, the fear of civilisational collapse forces us to analyse anxious *anticipations* of future annihilation as well as *memories* of past and ongoing calamities.

Thus, we suggest, the Anthropocene also changes everything for memory studies. Even if there have been attempts to account for the transnational and transcultural dimensions of memory,³⁴ visible in concepts like ‘cosmopolitan memory’³⁵ and ‘multidirectional memory,’³⁶ the current situation forces us to adopt a perspective closer to what Nixon calls ‘socioenvironmental memory’.³⁷ And even that phrase perhaps fails to capture the ways in which climate change alters the very parameters and possibility of cultural as well as personal memory. Building upon such observations, this special issue on *planetary memory* poses questions of crucial importance to critics working in the fields of literature, environmental studies, and memory studies, and to anyone seeking to understand the imaginary and epistemic challenges engendered by the experience and events of climate change. The essays in this issue variously pursue interrogations of how existing paradigms of memory may be remediated to imagine the past from a posthuman or more-than-human perspective, and gauge the possibilities of reading the physical landscape as an index of environmental memory. They ask what literary or cultural imaginaries might help to make the palimpsestic layering of human and non-human bodies visible to critical and popular readers, and assess the implications the ongoing problem of climate change poses for the temporal and spatial scales through which we imagine our relationship to the past. In so doing, the contributors seek to question how works of literary fiction challenge or reinforce established models of historical experience, and ask how new practices of reading and writing might encourage recognition of the non-human impact of ecological violence without eliding the inequitable dispersal of human suffering, occluding the cultural, geographical and historical specificity of destruction and loss, or reinscribing anthropocentric frames of memory. Accordingly, the articles collectively probe which modes of

mourning and working through, not to mention anticipation and dread, might be appropriate to the ongoing trauma of climate change.

Planetary memory in contemporary American fiction

The central question addressed in this special issue is how conflicting scales of time and space enlarge and contract the canvas of contemporary US fiction and its memorial cultural work.

Expanding on this focus, the essays aim to combine a regional attention to the impacts of climate change and other environmental phenomena, with an examination of the ways in which such issues may intersect with established national imaginaries, and an analysis of the scalar, cognitive, and aesthetic challenges posed by the demand to recognise the ultimate planetary scope of such problems.

Despite our emphasis on the planetary dimensions of memory and imagination, we have restricted the focus of this issue to contemporary American fiction. For whilst it is certainly true that accounts of climate change and its cultural fallout need to be extended in spatial as well as temporal (not to mention linguistic) terms, it is also important to note that the major critics working on planetary issues underscore the importance of attending to the complex scalar, cultural, and historical particularities that arise from the interrelation of the micro and macro, the personal and the public, the human and the more-than-human, by rooting their studies of the planetary in emphatically local, or national, terrains. Even Heise's *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* does not lead us from place to planet, but directs our attention to startling superimpositions of the global and the local. Upon closer scrutiny, the title's 'and' does not have a disjunctive meaning (contrasting an earlier sense of place with a more cutting-edge sense of planet), but a conjunctive one (highlighting the relations between place and planet). Indeed, critics have argued that the concept of 'place' can still be useful for environmental criticism if it

includes rather than excludes transnational flows of workers, for instance, and an ‘agrarianism of the margins’.³⁸ If we look closely at certain texts, moreover, we may actually find a ‘persistence of national categories in the global imagination’.³⁹ Largely unremarked in existing criticism, in fact, is the way in which much of the seminal work on climate change in literary and cultural studies maintains a specifically American, if more generally Anglophone, dimension, which we aim to bring into clearer focus. Dimock’s writing juxtaposes older and remote cultural traditions with canonical US literature, for instance, and even Nixon’s intriguing accounts of writers from the global South often compares their work with American texts, like Upton Sinclair’s *Oil*, Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* and James Baldwin’s “Stranger in the Village”. This implicit Anglophone focus is worth examining more closely, but the present issue takes a different approach, and clarifies the interaction between micro and macro perspectives by juxtaposing regional, national and planetary imaginaries, taking seriously the point that climate change may reinforce rather than downplay regional identities. As Raymond Malewitz has argued, the consequences of global warming ‘tend to reaffirm rather than minimize the sense of a region’s uniqueness within the larger geography of the United States’ and the regional dimension of climate-related fiction is therefore not surprising, seeing that it ‘frames the sites of such catastrophes as worthy of representation precisely because of the transformations they are undergoing’.⁴⁰

We have furthermore chosen to focus on recent fiction, even though other critics have demonstrated the relevance of earlier forms of US literature to the Anthropocene mindset. We have thus chosen to focus on recent novels, and not just for reasons of coherence.

Complementing work on older British and English literature, McGurl has published intriguing articles about ‘the posthuman comedy’ and ‘cultural geology’ in the writing of H.P. Lovecraft, Raymond Carver and Nathaniel Hawthorne, for instance, and Matthew Taylor has expanded

these claims in *Universes Without Us* (2013), a study of the posthuman cosmologies of writers like Poe, Adams and Hurston. We have nevertheless decided to focus on twenty-first century literature. Because even if earlier periods are important, Timothy Clark has warned that we should be careful with long historical narratives about the Anthropocene:

This renewed interest in kinds of thought previously overlooked must also avoid the danger of positing the Anthropocene in terms that make it continuous with a long and varied tradition of thought on the relations between weather, climate and human cultures, instead of also being a drastic break with these. Ecocritical readings cannot just be some act of supposed retrieval, but now becomes also a measure of the irreversible break in consciousness and understanding, an emergent in unreadability. For instance, pollution in London would not have been of concern to people in seventeenth-century Massachusetts. In the twenty-first century this is no longer so clear.⁴¹

There are continuities, but there are also breaks. We have been here before, but never like this. And even if we want to understand the long lineage of our present predicament more closely, we would argue, it makes sense to try and understand the current situation and its cultural responses in more detail first. Getting a better grasp of where we are will allow us to see how we got there and how we might go elsewhere in a future that will have a drastically different impact on distinct countries and regions. In at least some cases, then, the point of this planetary turn is not an arguably utopian desire to talk about everything at the same time but to expand and enrich national archives – while creating more room for larger, transnational conversations.

The special issue does not just focus on contemporary American fiction but on works that highlight distinct regions of the US. Accordingly, each of our case studies focuses on a different American landscape, from the Appalachians, to the Southwest, the Rust Belt, New York City,

Alaska, New Orleans, and the Rocky Mountains, in order to examine how the ecological, cultural, economic, and historical specificity of these environments is underscored and undermined by their implication in networks of planetary significance and scope. Whilst, as intimated above, our focus on the planetary dimensions of memory inevitably emphasises the ways in which the problems of the contemporary moment might alternatively reinforce or challenge existing cultural imaginaries, our examination of twenty-first-century fiction highlights the fact that all memory work essentially involves a reconfiguration of the past from the perspective of the present. Bearing this in mind, the contributors to this issue seek to consider how the conditions that shape the increasingly fraught and illegible world of ‘what is’ might in turn impel a reconfiguration of our understanding of ‘what was’, indeed, of the ‘what is yet to come’. Put more simply, we contend a close reading of contemporary fictions permits important insights into the ways in which the problems of the Anthropocene recalibrate past-present-future relations across different scales of time and space, generating a series of unstable and previously unimagined connections between then and there, here and now, the human and the more-than-human.

Finally, it seems important to underscore that any account of planetary memory will always be partial, contingent, and vulnerable to revision. Whilst it is certainly true that the spectre of climate change (among other related phenomena) has expanded the temporal and spatial frames through which we may, collectively and individually, imagine past-present-future relations, it remains important to question whether it is really possible to think about memory, or indeed, the ‘planetary’, outside of anthropocentric modes of representation and cognition. Is the very idea of ‘climatological’ or ‘geological’ memory, in its appeal to the pre- (and most likely, post-) anthropogenic realms of deep time and space, merely a further interpolation of the more-than-human? Are such concepts, as Wulf Kansteiner argues of the more general notion of

cultural trauma, merely a ‘category mistake’ – in Susannah Radstone’s terms, ‘hardening into literality what might better be regarded as a series of compelling metaphors’?⁴² Whilst attending to such questions, it seems that, to make sense of a future that is already with us and has in some ways been with us for a long time, we need a new toolkit, a form of ‘history 4°’, as Ian Baucom has recently noted, referring to the projected rise in global temperature as well as to the need for more flexible frameworks that are able to include truly micro- and macroscopic phenomena. In a similar vein, we argue, we now also need a form of ‘memory 4°’.⁴³ Differently put, and fundamental to the aims of this special edition, we need to study, develop and recognise new modes of cultural memory and anxious anticipation as they emerge and evolve; accordingly, we hope to open a new conversation about practices of remembering and remembrance on an increasingly fragile planet.

¹ Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014).

² Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change’, *New Literary History*, 43.1 (2012).

³ Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2010); Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (London: Polity, 2013).

⁴ Karen Barad, ‘Posthumanist performativity: toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter’, *Signs* 28 (2003), pp. 801-831; Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007); Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010); Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

⁵ Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2015).

⁶ David J. Alworth, *Site Reading. Fiction, Art, Social Form* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2015), p. 155.

⁷ Jennifer Wenzel, ‘Planet vs. Globe’, *English Language Notes*, 52 (2014), pp. 19-30, p. 21.

-
- ⁸ Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2015).
- ⁹ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p.23.
- ¹⁰ See Pheng Cheah, 'World Against Globe: Toward a Normative Conception of World Literature', *New Literary History* 45.3 (2014), pp. 303-29, and Eric Hayot, 'On Literary Worlds', *MLQ* 72.2 (2011), pp. 129-61.
- ¹¹ Lorraine Code 2006
- ¹² Wendell Berry, 'Word and Flesh', *What Are People For?* (New York: North Point Press, 1990), p. 198.
- ¹³ See Jo Guldi and David Armitage, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- ¹⁴ Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
- ¹⁵ Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 61.
- ¹⁶ Adam Trexler, *Anthropocene Fictions* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015).
- ¹⁷ Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 39.
- ¹⁸ Clark, *Ecocriticism*.
- ¹⁹ Tom Cohen ed., *Telemorphosis: Theory in the Era of Climate Change* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012).
- ²⁰ Tim Clark ed. 'Deconstruction in the Anthropocene', *Oxford Literary Review*, 34.2 (2012).
- ²¹ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, p. 2.
- ²² Greg Garrard, Gary Handwerk, and Sabine Wilke eds., 'Imagining Anew: Challenges of Representing the Anthropocene', *Environmental Humanities*, 5 (2014).
- ²³ Allison Carruth and Robert P. Marzec eds., 'Environmental Visualization in the Anthropocene: Technologies, Aesthetics, Ethics'. *Public Culture*, 26.2 (2014).
- ²⁴ Tobias Boes and Kate Marshall eds., 'Writing the Anthropocene', *the minnesota review*, 83 (2014), pp. 60-72.
- ²⁵ Mark McGurl, 'The Posthuman Comedy', *Critical Inquiry* 38.3 (2012), pp. 533-53. Also see McGurl, 'Gigantic Realism. The Rise of the Novel and the Comedy of Scale', *Critical Inquiry* 43.2 (2017), pp. 403-30.
- ²⁶ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, p. 169.
- ²⁷ See Dimock, *Through Other Continents*.
- ²⁸ See Fabien Locher and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, "Modernity's Frail Climate: A Climate History of Environmental Reflexivity," *Critical Inquiry*, 38.3 (Spring 2012), pp. 579-98.
- ²⁹ See Tobias Menely, "'The Present Obfuscation": Cowper's *Task* and the Time of Climate Change", *PMLA* 127.3 (2012), pp. 477-92 and R. John Williams, "World Futures", *Critical Inquiry* 42 (2016), pp. 473-546.
- ³⁰ See Rosalind Williams, *The Triumph of Human Empire: Verne, Morris and Stevenson at the End of the World* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013), p. 296.
- ³¹ Williams, *Triumph*, p. 346.
- ³² Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p.131.
- ³³ Aravamudan 2013.
- ³⁴ See Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney eds., *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014); Richard Crownshaw ed., 'Transcultural

Memory', *Parallax* 17.4 (2011); Lucy Bond and Jessica Rapson eds. *The Transcultural Turn: Interrogating Memory Between and Beyond Borders* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014).

³⁵ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

³⁶ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

³⁷ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, p. 24.

³⁸ Janet Fiskio, 'Unsettling Ecocriticism: Rethinking Agrarianism, Place, and Citizenship', *American Literature* 84.2 (2012), pp. 301-25.

³⁹ Peter Boxall, *Twenty-First Century Fiction. A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013) p. 178.

⁴⁰ Raymond Malewitz, 'Climate-Change Infrastructure and the Volatilizing of American Regionalism', *Modern Fiction Studies* 61.4 (2015), pp. 715-30.

⁴¹ Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p. 62.

⁴² Susannah Radstone, 'Reconceiving Binaries: the Limits of Memory', *History Workshop Journal*, 59 (Spring 2005), pp. 134-150, 137.

⁴³ Ian Baucom, 'History 4°: Postcolonial Method and Anthropocene Time', *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* Vol. 1.1 (2014), pp. 123-42.